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United Nations

Committee on Natural Resources

Report on the Third Session
(6-16 May 1996)

Economic and Social Council

Official Records, 1996
Supplement No. 11

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NOTE

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SUMMARY

General

In accordance with its mandate, the Committee identified and pursued priority questions concerning long-term problems and trends of worldwide significance in the field of mineral and water resources, notably in relation to sustainable development and poverty alleviation, and developed advice for the Economic and Social Council with respect to concrete actions for the implementation of Agenda 21 and for the programming and implementation of activities in the United Nations system.

The Committee expressed its appreciation for the inter-agency cooperation that had already occurred, notably in relation to a comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world, the global water partnerships, the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and the Global Environmental Monitoring System: Water. The Committee identified particular priority directions within the scope of those initiatives, and also identified similar needs for inter-agency cooperation in relation to key minerals issues.

Water

The Committee noted that, since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), a range of detailed studies and assessments of the role of water in societies, their economies and the environments upon which they depend has led to a more precise definition of the critical issues facing water resources management. The comprehensive assessment of the world's freshwater resources, to be submitted to the General Assembly at its special session in 1997 through the Commission on Sustainable Development, constitutes an important first step in future assessments of the state of the world's water resources. None the less, despite the warnings of an impending water crisis made at several major international conferences, such as the United Nations Water Conference in 1977 and the International Conference on Water and the Environment and UNCED in 1992, there has been a general inability to take appropriate action for dealing with such a crisis.

In the opinion of the Committee, the driving forces behind increasingly serious water problems included rapid world population growth - in terms of both rapid urbanization and rural populations growing beyond local carrying capacity - and rising expectations and dependence on reliable water-related services to support social needs, economic activity and food production. The current water crisis should also be broadly seen to be the result of inadequate socio-economic responses to biophysical constraints. As a result of past and present land and water mismanagement, inter alia, the water resource base in several regions had become critically limited in relation to centres of demand; water quality was experiencing overall degradation, with a resulting breakdown in public health and agricultural productivity; the impact of extreme hydrological events, such as floods and droughts, had been exacerbated by land mismanagement; and groundwater in particular had been overutilized as a source of water and a sink for effluents and other land-based pollutants.

In addition, the Committee noted that new insights had emerged into the regional distribution of population, particularly in terms of per capita income, water availability and use. The current situation had serious implications for the patterns of economic growth and food security in several regions of the world; indeed, water might well become a limiting factor for economic and social development in many of the poorer countries of the world. Current data also indicated that about two thirds of the population living in low-income countries were already facing conditions of vulnerability, stress or scarcity. In fact, what had often been referred to as a global water crisis was now increasingly seen as a series of worsening regional or local crises with global implications. As far as the freshwater resources of the world were concerned, the concept "Think globally, act locally", which had been formulated at a time when attention was focused on phenomena in the global atmosphere, should be replaced by the more effective concept "Think regionally, act locally".

The Committee was of the opinion that managing the increasing water scarcity problem would need to combine concern for economic efficiency with concern for social equity. Wherever scarcity was a result of inefficient water use, demand management and change in crop production patterns must provide solutions. Wherever countries were already using more water than was environmentally sustainable, fundamental changes in production and consumption patterns would be required, with implications for world trade and other sectors. The efficient management and use of rainwater and soil moisture was essential in drought-prone areas. Water quality degradation was becoming an even more serious problem in many countries and regions.

The Committee was also increasingly concerned that current trends to decentralize and privatize the delivery of water services were likely to result in water becoming a private good at the expense of recognizing the crucial social value of water. In some countries, the legal framework being proposed would allow the sale of water rights, which could result in monopolies and hoarding of water rights without the recognition of historical uses or a requirement for beneficial use. If water markets were to be implemented, they should fit into the wider scope of national socio-economic policies and should respect environmental requirements.

In sum, the Committee concluded that urgent action was called for in the following areas, among others:

(a) Greater integration of national socio-economic development strategies with water-related biophysical constraints, with particular emphasis on food security imperatives;

(b) Emphasis on new dimensions of demand management, such as more efficient consumption and production patterns, comparative advantages in the context of the global economy, and more efficient mechanisms for allocating water among different uses;

(c) Promotion of an intersectoral approach to land-use and water resources management.

Minerals

The Committee was particularly concerned with minerals issues in the context of the priority accorded, at relevant international conferences, to sustainability, distribution of wealth and the cultural significance of land. The Committee placed particular emphasis on global issues of sustainability and the need to move towards sustainable production and consumption patterns.

The Committee noted that the definition of those patterns had to take into account key minerals issues - the capacity of the environment to absorb the physical and chemical impacts of the use of mineral resources, the sustainability of supply of essentially non-renewable mineral resources, and the possibility of modifying production and consumption patterns through greater efficiency of minerals use, new technologies, recycling and substitution. Moreover, those minerals issues required the consideration of the whole mineral cycle, from mineral exploration and discovery, through extraction, processing, manufacture and utilization, to eventual recovery or disposal.

The Committee concluded that global demand was likely to increase for the foreseeable future, mainly as a result of the continuing increase in global population through most of the next century and the demand for improved living standards in developing countries. The Committee also concluded that present demand trends and the consumption patterns that caused them were unsustainable, so that strategies to maintain supply had to be linked to effective strategies for moving sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Concerns about environmental impacts and competition for land use as the global population expanded were also reducing the capacity to meet the demand for minerals. It was therefore important that issues of minerals supply be part of the integrated approach to land management promoted in chapter 10 of Agenda 21.

The time-scales for the stabilization of the global economy and adjustment to a relatively steady state and equitable society, in which population was in broad balance with the availability of resources, were not within the reasonably foreseeable future. Emphasis therefore needed to be placed on avoiding potential problems by improving strategies for the optimal and efficient supply and use of mineral resources with minimal environmental impact.

In accordance with the "precautionary principle", the Committee identified a number of concrete steps at the global level that could assist in the management of mineral resources and environmental impacts during the period of transition to more sustainable consumption patterns.

The Committee was of the opinion that implementation of those steps required leadership from and coordination by the United Nations Secretariat, the specialized agencies, the regional commissions, and other organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

The Committee also reviewed a number of social and economic issues in the minerals sector that had a particular bearing on developing countries and economies in transition. The Committee decided that the basic problem of improving the capacity of those countries to capture the maximum economic and social benefits of their potential for mineral production should be the principal focus of its inter-sessional activities and of the agenda of its fourth session.

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Chapter I

MATTERS CALLING FOR ACTION BY THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL OR BROUGHT TO ITS ATTENTION

A. Draft resolutions

1. The Committee on Natural Resources recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

DRAFT RESOLUTION I

Integration of key minerals issues into the implementation of Agenda 21 1/

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling that Agenda 21 called for the identification of balanced patterns of consumption worldwide that the Earth can support in the long term,

Recalling also that in Agenda 21 and the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, it is stated that the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances,

Noting that the policy implications of trends and projections in consumption and production patterns were evaluated in a report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fourth session in 1996, 2/ and that the Commission endorsed the eco-efficiency approach and stressed the need for an appropriate balance between supply-side and demand-side approaches,

Noting also that in its inter-sessional strategy paper entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", 3/ the Committee on Natural Resources analysed the implications of those policy approaches for the minerals sector in terms of the capacity of the environment to absorb the physical and chemical impacts of minerals resource use, the sustainability of the supply of essentially non-renewable mineral resources, and the possibilities for modifying production and consumption patterns throughout the mineral cycle by introducing greater efficiency of minerals use, new technologies, recycling and substitution,

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1/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

2/ E/CN.17/1996/5 and Add.1.

3/ E/C.7/1996/11.

Recalling that those minerals issues impinge heavily on developing countries and economies in transition that seek to capture greater benefits from mineral development, and consequently also recalling the need to avoid undesirable impacts on those economies,

1. Brings to the attention of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the relevant United Nations bodies and the regional commissions the inter-sessional strategy paper entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21"; 3/

2. Notes with appreciation, in principle, the recommendations for concrete action contained in resolutions 3/4, 3/5 and 3/6 of the Committee on Natural Resources, and urges full consideration of means of implementation through the relevant priority programmes and by maximizing the opportunities for collaboration between interested parties.

DRAFT RESOLUTION II

Integrated water resources development and management

The Economic and Social Council,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 32/158 of 19 December 1977, in which the Assembly approved the Mar del Plata Action Plan, 4/

Also recalling the recommendations related to water resources contained in Agenda 21, 1/ which was adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and the decisions concerning water resources made by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its second session, in 1994,

Further recalling General Assembly resolution 50/126 of 20 December 1995 concerning water supply and sanitation,

Bearing in mind the outcome of the Intergovernmental Conference to Adopt a Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, which was held in Washington, D.C., from 23 October to 3 November 1995,

1. Takes note of the work being undertaken on the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world;

2. Takes note with appreciation of the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee on Natural Resources entitled "Averting the multi-cause water crises ahead: key coping strategies", 5/ which contains an analysis of pressing issues with worldwide implications in the field of water resources;

3. Reaffirms the concept of water as a scarce and vulnerable resource needed for the integrated development and management of land and

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4/ Report of the United Nations Water Conference, Mar del Plata, 14-25 March 1977 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.77.II.A.12), chap. I.

5/ E/C.7/1996/6 and Corr.1.

water resources in the framework of the national planning process, including its linkages to economic and social objectives, land and ocean resources;

4. Recommends that Governments consider adopting measures designed to improve the efficient use of water resources in the context of sustainable production and consumption patterns and the growing importance of world trade;

5. Recommends that Governments take urgent action, as appropriate, to assign the highest priority to the formulation and implementation of policies for the management of water resources in large cities and towns; water resources requirements for food production relative to other needs; accelerating significantly the rate of progress in the provision of water-supply and sanitation, particularly for the urban and rural poor; the control of pollution from land-based sources, sewage and effluents; and the protection of groundwater from overutilization and pollution;

6. Also recommends that Governments, in accordance with their national policies and priorities and with the aid of the international community, take appropriate measures for enhancing national and regional self-sufficiency with regard to the financing, operation and maintenance of water resources projects, and that they take measures to enhance their institutional, legal and technical capabilities in the area of water resources, including the strengthening and, where necessary, the establishment of regional organizations;

7. Urges Governments, with the support of the organizations of the United Nations system, other multilateral and bilateral organizations, and non-governmental organizations, to consider the possibility of establishing pilot projects on river basins and regions that are deemed to be suffering from serious water-related stresses with a view to developing and implementing policies designed to avert a water crisis;

8. Also urges the organizations of the United Nations system, international financing organizations, other multilateral and bilateral organizations, and non-governmental organizations and the international community at large to give priority attention to providing Governments with technical and financial support in their efforts to deal with such problems;

9. Invites the organizations of the United Nations system to consider the findings and recommendations contained in the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee on Natural Resources entitled "Averting the multi-cause water crises ahead: key coping strategies", 5/ in particular with regard to the ongoing preparation of a comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world, and invites them to give wide dissemination to the strategy paper.

B. Draft decisions

2. The Committee on Natural Resources also recommends to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of the following draft decisions:

DRAFT DECISION I

Report of the Committee on Natural Resources on its third session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fourth session of the Committee

The Economic and Social Council:

(a) Takes note of the report of the Committee on Natural Resources on its third session;

(b) Approves the provisional agenda and documentation for the fourth session of the Committee set out below:

PROVISIONAL AGENDA AND DOCUMENTATION FOR THE THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Activities of the United Nations system in the field of water and mineral resources, and inter-agency coordination.

Documentation

Separate reports of the Secretary-General on water and mineral resources, respectively, focusing on progress made towards achieving sustainable development, describing the coordination and integration of activities of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies and the success of the programmes in meeting the goals set

4. Review of actions implemented by Governments following the consideration by the General Assembly of the comprehensive global water assessment.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on follow-up to the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world

5. Issues related to assessment and management of land and water resources on an integrated basis.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on issues related to the spatial planning of land (including minerals) and water resources

6. Environmental protection and restoration issues arising from mineral industry activities.

Documentation

Report of the Secretary-General on the development and application of state-of-the-art technologies for the utilization/reprocessing of mineral industry wastes with the aim of reducing the ecological burden on the environment

7. Issues related to the social and economic impacts of the mining sector, especially in developing countries and economies in transition.

Documentation

Discussion paper of the Secretary-General, prepared with the assistance of members of the Committee, on the basic problem of improving the capacity of developing countries and economies in transition to capture the maximum economic and social benefits of their potential for mineral production

8. Authoritative technological assessment of progress towards the sustainable extraction and utilization of minerals.

Documentation

Oral report by the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on their consultations together and with appropriate governmental and non-governmental organizations with a view to forging a partnership to fulfil the proposed technological functions in a comprehensive and authoritative way.

9. Global land monitoring programme.

Documentation

Oral report by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme on their consultations, in the light of the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee on Natural Resources entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", 3/ the existing blueprint and experience with the Global Water Quality Monitoring Programme of the Global Environmental Monitoring System (GEMS/WATER), with a view to formulating a plan for cooperation with national agencies in order to develop such a database

10. Global knowledge base on mineral resource potential.

Documentation

Oral report on the results of the consultations between the United Nations Secretariat, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the regional commissions and the international mining industry on their consideration of the detailed requirements of a global knowledge base on mineral resource potential, in the light of the inter-sessional strategy

paper of the Committee on Natural Resources entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", 3/ and ways in which such a knowledge base might be achieved, including initiation through a regional pilot project

11. Provisional agenda for the fifth session of the Committee.

12. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fourth session.

DRAFT DECISION II

Duration of future sessions of the Committee on Natural Resources

The Economic and Social Council, on the recommendation of the Committee on Natural Resources, decides that the duration of future sessions of the Committee shall be eight working days, beginning at its fourth session, in 1998.

C. Resolutions of the Committee brought to the attention of the Council

3. The following resolutions adopted by the Committee are brought to the attention of the Economic and Social Council:

Resolution 3/1. Activities of the United Nations system in the field of water and mineral resources, and inter-agency cooperation

The Committee on Natural Resources,

Noting with appreciation the valuable overviews provided to the Committee in both the minerals and the water sectors and also the reports submitted by United Nations organizations and regional commissions,

Recognizing the value of such reporting as a background to its deliberations and in the provision of advice to the Economic and Social Council,

Recognizing also that the Committee provides a unique forum for interaction between executing agencies of the United Nations system and a wide range of world opinion, and that direct input from United Nations organizations to the Committee's discussion of issues and priorities is highly desirable,

Expressing its appreciation to the Secretariat for arranging, as requested, at the third session of the Committee, the valuable opportunity for exchange of information and views provided by the Symposium on Corporations, Communities and Sustainable Development, which was organized by the Division of Environment Management and Social Development of the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the Secretariat,

Also expressing its appreciation to the Secretariat for arranging, as requested, at the third session of the Committee, the Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Strategic Issues Concerning Transboundary Water Resources, which was organized by the same Department, in particular its appreciation for the contributions of invited experts,

1. Requests the Secretary-General to provide similar overview reports for the Committee at its fourth session;

2. Requests the United Nations Secretariat to provide Committee members with timely information and documentation on relevant deliberations, decisions and actions of the United Nations system, including those of the regional commissions, during the inter-sessional period;

3. Invites United Nations organizations and regional commissions and non-governmental organizations to join with the Committee in active discussion of the agenda items at the Committee's fourth session and, most particularly, of the Committee's own strategy papers.

Resolution 3/2. Environmental protection and restoration issues arising from mineral industry activities

The Committee on Natural Resources,

Noting with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on key advances in the development and application of state-of-the-art technologies for minimizing degradation caused by the mining and processing of mineral resources, 6/

Noting also the substantial advances made in best practices in this area in recent years, especially by major mining companies, as shown in various publications containing case-studies of environmental practices,

Noting further that environmentally sound projects are also generally economically sound, and provide a better basis for social development than short-term developments that require costly remedial measures,

Recognizing, however, that both knowledge of and capacity to employ the most efficient and environmentally friendly technologies may often be lacking in developing countries,

Recognizing also that economic imperatives may jeopardize the adoption of appropriate practices,

1. Encourages the development of the role of the United Nations system, through the Secretariat, as a focal point for the collection and dissemination of information on environmentally friendly technologies, on a continuing basis;

2. Also encourages the cooperation of international research and funding agencies and investors with host countries in the preparation and implementation of environmental impact assessments and management plans;

3. Requests the Secretary-General to submit to the Committee on Natural Resources at its fourth session a report on the development and application of state-of-the-art technologies for the utilization/reprocessing of mineral industry wastes with the aim of reducing the ecological burden on the environment.

6/ E/C.7/1996/10.

Resolution 3/3. Issues related to the social and economic impacts of the mining sector, especially in developing countries and economies in transition

The Committee on Natural Resources,

Recalling that in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development 7/ it is pointed out that although the global wealth of nations has multiplied sevenfold in the past fifty years, the situation of most developing countries, particularly of Africa and the least developed countries, is critical and requires special attention and action, and that countries with economies in transition also require the support of the international community,

Noting that the mining sector is of considerable potential importance for narrowing the economic gap between developed and developing countries, although it has not so far realized this potential in some mining economies,

Recognizing, in particular, the important role that the development of significant mineral deposits has often played in the social and economic development of local communities,

Recognizing also that artisanal and small-scale mining can also initiate and contribute to economic and social development under appropriate conditions,

Having considered with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General containing an assessment of benefits accruing to host countries from the inflow of funds and technology for mineral development 8/ and the report of the Secretary-General on developments in small-scale mining, 9/

1. Notes, with respect to capital-intensive mining projects with finite operational lives, that special consideration needs to be given to sustaining the social and economic development of local communities after termination of mining, and therefore urges Governments to put mechanisms in place, as part of their regulatory regimes, to ensure participation in decision-making by all parties involved at each stage of mineral project development, with the particular aim of capturing long-term benefits;

2. Urges Member States, with respect to small-scale mining, to put in place appropriate, people-centred, institutional and regulatory arrangements that would formalize these economic activities, and would allow appropriate interaction with and assistance from international financing institutions and multinational mining companies;

3. Notes the negative social impacts on local communities that are sometimes associated with the privatization of State-owned mineral assets, particularly if State mining enterprises are also involved in the maintenance of civic facilities, and concludes that, as far as possible, Governments should devise innovative privatization plans so that provision is made for all the economic and social functions performed before privatization;

7/ See Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.8).

8/ E/C.7/1996/8.

9/ E/C.7/1996/9.

4. Decides that the basic problem of improving the capacity of developing countries and economies in transition to capture the maximum sustainable economic and social benefits of their potential for mineral production should be the principal focus of its inter-sessional activities and of the agenda of its fourth session, and requests the Secretary-General to prepare a discussion paper on this topic, with the assistance of members of the Committee.

Resolution 3/4. Authoritative technological assessment of progress towards sustainable extraction and utilization of minerals

The Committee on Natural Resources,

Noting the compelling evidence that the current trends of increasing use of both metallic and non-metallic minerals are unsustainable, in terms of both supply and environmental impacts,

Noting also the need for proposed changes in production and consumption patterns to be based on objective and authoritative technological assessments of impacts throughout the life cycle of mineral use,

Conscious of the absence of any widely representative top-level technological body that currently fills this function with respect to mining and materials,

Aware, however, of the more limited but developing independent initiatives that are currently being undertaken in this field by various organizations, including the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,

1. Endorses the need for authoritative assessment and dissemination of information on technological progress towards the sustainable extraction and use of mineral resources through improved efficiency, new technologies, substitution and recycling;

2. Recommends that the above-mentioned organizations, in the light of the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", 3/ consult together and with appropriate governmental and non-governmental organizations with a view to forging a partnership to fulfil the proposed technological functions in a comprehensive and authoritative way.

Resolution 3/5. Global land monitoring programme

The Committee on Natural Resources,

Noting that there is currently a huge gap in global environmental monitoring programmes, in that current programmes do not deal with the natural chemical variability of the land surface or with changes brought about by both natural and orthogenic processes,

Noting also that a comprehensive blueprint for such a programme has already been produced by the International Geochemical Mapping Project sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the

International Union of Geological Sciences, and that there is an urgent need for its implementation,

Recognizing that monitoring activities can only be undertaken with the prior acquiescence of the States concerned,

Recognizing also that since land-based activities, inter alia, are a source of the pollution of both freshwater and marine environments, such a land-monitoring programme would be complementary to and would greatly enhance the value of existing programmes, in particular the multi-agency Global Water Quality Monitoring Programme - the water quality component of the Global Environmental Monitoring System - which was designed to monitor freshwater for development under the leadership of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme,

Recognizing further that a complementary global land quality monitoring programme, which would constitute the land quality component of the Global Environmental Monitoring System, would be highly relevant to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, with its role as lead agency in the coordination of integrated land management under Agenda 21,

1. Endorses the need to establish a global geochemical database as an essential contribution to objective and effective environmental and resource management;

2. Recommends that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Environment Programme consult together, in the light of the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", 3/ the blueprint produced by the International Geochemical Mapping Project, and experience with the Global Water Quality Monitoring Programme of the Global Environmental Monitoring System, with a view to formulating a plan for cooperation with national agencies in order to develop a global geochemical database.

Resolution 3/6. Global knowledge base on mineral resource potential

The Committee on Natural Resources,

Noting that it is essential that strategies for moving to sustainable consumption and production patterns of minerals be linked to strategies for maintaining supply, and that the goal of ensuring optimal and efficient use of available resources with minimum environmental impact requires that the demand be met from the most efficient sources worldwide,

Noting also that population pressures worldwide and their attendant environmental impacts are causing increasingly severe competition for land use, so that it is important for issues of mineral supply to be considered part of the integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources, as proposed in Agenda 21, 1/

Considering that prudent management, following the precautionary principle, requires that appropriate information be available on the sustainability of supply during the period of transition to sustainable consumption and production patterns,

Aware that those issues are particularly important for developing countries and economies in transition,

1. Endorses the need for a global knowledge base on mineral resource potential, in terms of potential source areas, to be developed so that it can be integrated with other land-use information as an essential part of an integrated approach to the planning and management of natural resources;

2. Recommends that the United Nations Secretariat, in consultation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the regional commissions and the international mining industry, consider the detailed requirements of such a knowledge base, in the light of the inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21", 3/ and ways in which such a knowledge base might be achieved, including initiation through a regional pilot project.

Resolution 3/7. Reports in the field of water resources submitted to the Committee on Natural Resources at its fourth session

The Committee on Natural Resources,

1. Takes note with appreciation of the reports of the Secretary-General on institutional and legal issues relevant to the implementation of water markets, the state of the freshwater resources of the world and preparation of implementation plans for averting the freshwater crisis; 10/

2. Also takes note with appreciation of the reports of the regional commissions on freshwater resources in their respective regions; 11/

3. Requests the Secretary-General, in close cooperation with organs and organizations of the United Nations system, to prepare a report on follow-up to the comprehensive assessment of the freshwater resources of the world, including methodological questions arising from the characterization of vulnerability and problem areas in assessing the freshwater resources of the world, for the consideration of the Committee at its fourth session;

4. Requests the Secretary-General, in consultation with the organs and organizations of the United Nations system, to prepare a report on issues related to the spatial planning of land resources, including mineral resources, and water resources, taking into account urban and rural development needs and food security requirements, as well as the protection of ecosystems.

10/ E/C.7/1996/3, 4 and 5.

11/ E/C.7/1996/13-17.

Chapter II

ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN THE FIELD OF WATER AND MINERAL RESOURCES, AND INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION FOCUSING ON PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

4. The Committee considered item 3 of its agenda at its 1st to 3rd meetings, on 6, 7 and 13 May 1996. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system in mineral resources (E/C.7/1996/7);

(b) Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in the areas of water and mineral resources (E/C.7/1996/12);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic Commission for Africa in the area of water resources (E/C.7/1996/14);

(d) Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic Commission for Europe in the area of water resources (E/C.7/1996/15);

(e) Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in the area of water resources (E/C.7/1996/16);

(f) Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic Commission for Western Asia in the area of water resources (E/C.7/1996/17);

(g) Report entitled "Water resources management: overview of the activities of the Department of Development Support and Management Services and comments on progress in the implementation of Agenda 21" (E/C.7/1996/CRP.1);

(h) Note by the Secretary-General on water-related activities of the World Meteorological Organization and the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (E/C.7/1996/CRP.2).

5. At the 1st meeting, on 6 May, the representative of the Division of Environment Management and Social Development, Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat, made an introductory statement on activities in the field of mineral resources and the representative of the Division for Sustainable Development, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat, made an introductory statement on activities in the field of water resources.

6. At the same meeting, the representative of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific made a statement. Statements were also made by the representatives of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

7. At the 2nd meeting, on 7 May, statements by Mr. R. W. R. Rutland, Mr. V. M. Dolgopolov, Mr. M. N. Khan, Mr. P. M. Chipungu, Mr. H. M. Oudshoorn, Mr. T. P. Z. Mpofu, Mr. D. B. Otchoun, Mr. Zhang Hai-Lun and Mr. N. Suryanarayanan.

8. At the same meeting, statements were made by the representatives of the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Development Programme.

9. At the 3rd meeting, on 13 May, the representative of the United Nations Environment Programme made a statement.

Chapter III

REVIEW OF PROGRESS ON WATER-RELATED ISSUES

10. The Committee considered item 4 of its agenda at the 1st and 2nd meetings of its Working Group on Water Resources, on 10 May 1996. It had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on institutional and legal issues relevant to the implementation of water markets (E/C.7/1996/3);

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the state of the freshwater resources of the world (E/C.7/1996/4);

(c) Note by the Secretary-General on freshwater resources in Asia and the Pacific (E/C.7/1996/13).

Chapter IV

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION PLANS FOR AVERTING THE FRESHWATER CRISIS

11. The Committee considered item 5 of its agenda at the 3rd meeting of its Working Group on Water Resources, on 13 May 1996. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the preparation of implementation plans for averting the freshwater crisis (E/C.7/1996/5).

Chapter V

FUTURE WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND THE STRATEGIES AND POLICIES THAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY SHOULD BE CONSIDERING IN RESPONSE

12. The Committee considered item 6 of its agenda at the 3rd and 4th meetings of its Working Group on Water Resources, on 13 May 1996. It had before it its inter-sessional strategy paper entitled "Averting the multi-cause water crises ahead: key coping strategies" (E/C.7/1996/6 and Corr.1), which was introduced by Ms. Malin Falkenmark.

Chapter VI

INFLOW OF FUNDS AND NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN THE MINERAL SECTOR OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION

13. The Committee considered item 7 of its agenda at the 1st meeting of its Working Group on Mineral Resources, on 7 May 1996. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the assessment of benefits accruing to host countries from the inflow of funds and technology for mineral development (E/C.7/1996/8).

Chapter VII

NEW GLOBAL AND REGIONAL APPROACHES TO MINERAL RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND THE ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

14. The Committee considered item 8 of its agenda at the 2nd meeting of its Working Group on Mineral Resources, on 8 May 1996.

Chapter VIII

DEVELOPMENTS IN SMALL-SCALE MINING

15. The Committee considered agenda item 9 of its agenda at the first meeting of its Working Group on Mineral Resources, on 7 May 1996. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on developments in small-scale mining (E/C.7/1996/9).

Chapter IX

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND RESTORATION ISSUES ARISING FROM MINERAL INDUSTRY ACTIVITIES

16. The Committee considered item 10 of its agenda at the 2nd meeting of its Working Group on Mineral Resources, on 8 May 1996. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on key advances in the development and application of state-of-the-art technologies for minimizing environmental degradation caused by the mining and processing of mineral resources (E/C.7/1996/10).

Chapter X

INTEGRATION OF THE ISSUE OF THE SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY OF MINERALS INTO THE UNITED NATIONS PROCESSES FOR ADDRESSING AGENDA 21

17. The Committee considered item 11 of its agenda at the 3rd meeting of its Working Group on Mineral Resources, on 9 May 1996. It had before it its inter-sessional strategy paper entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21" (E/C.7/1996/11), which was introduced by Mr. R. W. Roye Rutland.

Chapter XI

ACTION TAKEN BY THE COMMITTEE

A. Integration of key mineral issues into the implementation of Agenda 21

18. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Integration of key mineral issues into the implementation of Agenda 21", which it recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption (see chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution I).

B. Integrated water resources development and management

19. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Integrated water resources development and management", which it recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption (see chap. I, sect. A, draft resolution II).

C. Duration of future sessions of the Committee

20. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft decision entitled "Duration of future sessions of the Committee", which it recommended to the Economic and Social Council for adoption (see chap. I, sect. B, draft decision II).

D. Activities of the United Nations system in the field of water and mineral resources and inter-agency cooperation

21. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Activities of the United Nations system in the field of water and mineral resources, and inter-agency cooperation" (see chap. I, sect. C, resolution 3/1).

E. Environmental protection and restoration issues arising from mineral industry activities

22. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Environmental protection and restoration issues arising from mineral industry activities" (see chap. I, sect. C, resolution 3/2).

F. Issues relating to the social and economic impacts of the mining sector, especially in developing countries and in economies in transition

23. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Issues relating to the social and economic impacts of the mining sector, especially in developing countries and in economies in transition" (see chap. I, sect. C, resolution 3/3).

G. Authoritative technological assessment of progress towards sustainable extraction and utilization of minerals

24. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Authoritative technological assessment of progress towards sustainable extraction and utilization of minerals" (see chap. I, sect. C, resolution 3/4).

H. Global land monitoring programme

25. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Global land monitoring programme" (see chap. I, sect. C, resolution 3/5).

I. Global knowledge base on mineral resource potential

26. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Global knowledge base on mineral resource potential" (see chap. I, sect. C, resolution 3/6).

J. Reports in the field of water resources submitted to the Committee on Natural Resources at its fourth session

27. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted a draft resolution entitled "Reports in the field of water resources submitted to the Committee on Natural Resources at its fourth session" (see chap. I, sect. C, resolution 3/7).

Chapter XII

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE FOURTH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE

28. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee considered the provisional agenda for its fourth session, together with a list of requested documentation, and recommended that the Economic and Social Council approve them (see chap. I, sect. B, draft decision I).

Chapter XIII

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ITS THIRD SESSION

29. At its 4th meeting, on 16 May 1996, the Committee adopted the report on its third session (E/C.7/1996/L.2 and Add.1 and 2), as orally revised and amended during the discussion.

Chapter XIV

ORGANIZATION OF THE SESSION

A. Opening and duration of the session

30. The Committee on Natural Resources held its third session at United Nations Headquarters from 6 to 16 May 1996. It held four meetings. The session was opened by Mr. Mohammad Nawaz Khan, the Chairman of the Committee at its second session.

31. At the 1st meeting, on 6 May, the Director of the Division of Environment Management and Social Development made an opening statement on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Development Support and Management Services.

32. Also at the 1st meeting, the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development made a statement on behalf of the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

33. In accordance with paragraph 7 (b) (ii) of the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/235 on the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, the Committee had two working groups, one on mineral resources and one on water resources. The Working Group on Mineral Resources held three meetings and the Working Group on Water Resources held five.

B. Membership and attendance

34. In accordance with its decision 1992/218, the Economic and Social Council, having recalled General Assembly resolution 46/235, decided to establish, inter alia, a Committee on Natural Resources composed of 24 government-nominated experts from different Member States elected by the Council for a four-year term.

35. Fourteen members of the Committee attended the third session: Denis A. Davis, Vladislav M. Dolgopolov, Malin Falkenmark, Mohammad Nawaz Khan, Godfrey L. S. Leshange, Patrick Maselino Chipungu, José Manuel Mejía Angel, Thomas P. Z. Mpofu, Dossou Barthélémy Otchoun, Hendrik Martinus Oudshoorn, Neculai Pavlovschi, R. W. Roye Rutland, Natarayan Suryanarayanan, Zhang Hai-Lun.

36. The following States Members of the United Nations were represented by observers: Czech Republic, Syrian Arab Republic.

37. The following regional commissions were represented: Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

38. The following United Nations bodies and related organizations were represented: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Environment Programme, International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

39. The following specialized agencies were represented: International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, World Meteorological Organization.

C. Election of officers

40. At its 1st and 3rd meetings, on 6 and 13 May, the Committee elected, by acclamation, the following officers:

Chairman: Neculai PAVLOVSCHI

Vice-Chairmen: 12/ R. W. Roye RUTLAND
Hendrik Martinus OUDSHOORN

Rapporteur: Mohammad Nawaz KHAN

D. Agenda

41. At its 1st meeting, on 6 May, the Committee adopted the provisional agenda contained in document E/C.7/1996/1. The agenda was as follows:

1. Election of officers.

2. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters.

3. Activities of the United Nations system in the field of water and mineral resources, and inter-agency coordination focusing on progress made towards achieving sustainable development.

4. Review of progress on water-related issues:

   (a) Regional and global information on the state of the world's freshwater resources;

   (b) Institutional and legal issues in water resource management.

5. Review of implementation plans for averting the freshwater crisis.

6. Future water resources management issues and the strategies and policies that the international community should be considering in response.

7. Inflow of funds and new technologies in the mineral sector of developing countries and economies in transition:

   (a) Complementarity between the roles and obligations of investors and involved parties of host countries considering the intrinsic value of mineral deposits and accrued benefits;

   (b) Socio-economic aspects of the privatization of State-owned mineral assets.

8. New global and regional approaches on mineral resource assessment and the role of the United Nations system:

   (a) Integration of existing information on mineral resource potential so as to develop a global understanding;

12/ The Committee decided that a third Vice-Chairman would not be elected for the third session.

(b) Interregional workshop to formulate a pilot project in developing standard approaches to the identification and assessment of permissive mineral tracts.

9. Developments in small-scale mining.

10. Environmental protection and restoration issues arising from mineral industry activities.

11. Integration of the issue of the sustainable supply of minerals into the United Nations processes for addressing Agenda 21.

12. Provisional agenda for the fourth session of the Committee.

13. Adoption of the report of the Committee on its third session.

Annex

LIST OF DOCUMENTS BEFORE THE COMMISSION AT ITS THIRD SESSION

Document number	Agenda item	Title or description
E/C.7/1996/1	2	Provisional agenda for the session
E/C.7/1996/2		Symbol not used
E/C.7/1996/3	4 (b)	Report of the Secretary-General on institutional and legal issues relevant to the implementation of water markets
E/C.7/1996/4	4 (a)	Report of the Secretary-General on the state of the freshwater resources of the world
E/C.7/1996/5	5	Report of the Secretary-General on the preparation of implementation plans for averting the freshwater crisis
E/C.7/1996/6 and Corr.1	6	Inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee on Natural Resources entitled "Averting the multi-cause water crises ahead: key coping strategies"
E/C.7/1996/7	3	Report of the Secretary-General on technical cooperation activities of the United Nations system in mineral resources
E/C.7/1996/8	7 (a)	Report of the Secretary-General on the assessment of benefits accruing to host countries from the inflow of funds and technology for mineral development
E/C.7/1996/9	9	Report of the Secretary-General on developments in small-scale mining
E/C.7/1996/10	10	Report of the Secretary-General on key advances in the development and application of state-of-the-art technologies for minimizing environmental degradation caused by the mining and processing of mineral resources
E/C.7/1996/11	11	Inter-sessional strategy paper of the Committee on Natural Resources entitled "Towards the sustainable supply of minerals in the context of Agenda 21"
E/C.7/1996/12	3	Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in the areas of water and mineral resources

Document number	Agenda item	Title or description
E/C.7/1996/13	4 (a)	Note by the Secretary-General on freshwater resources in Asia and the Pacific
E/C.7/1996/14	3	Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic Commission for Africa in the area of water resources
E/C.7/1996/15	3	Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic Commission for Europe in the area of water resources
E/C.7/1996/16	3	Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in the area of water resources
E/C.7/1996/17	3	Note by the Secretary-General on activities of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia in the area of water resources
E/C.7/1996/L.1	2	Note by the Secretariat on organization of work
E/C.7/1996/L.2 and Add.1 and 2	13	Draft report of the Committee on its third session
E/C.7/1996/CRP.1	3	Report entitled "Water resources management: overview of the activities of the Department of Development Support and Management Services and comments on progress in the implementation of Agenda 21"
E/C.7/1996/CRP.2	3	Note by the Secretary-General on water-related activities of the World Meteorological Organization and the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development